

Central Intelligence Agency
Directorate of Intelligence

11 June 1968

Intelligence Memorandum

Communist Truck Losses in Laos
Since 31 March 1968 *

This memorandum analyzes the effects of the US bombing program in Laos since 31 March in terms of effective losses** inflicted on the Communist's truck inventory. Truck losses in Laos since 31 March have increased by about 10 percent as compared with the weekly rate observed during the first quarter of 1968. The increase in truck kills is due to heavier truck traffic, continued high levels of attack sorties and relatively good weather during April. Trucks effectively lost since 31 March number 1,447, a weekly average of 172, compared with an average effective loss of 157 trucks per week during the first quarter of 1968. Truck losses have ranged from a high of 276 during the week of 11 through 17 April to a low of 86 trucks for 2 through 8 May. Nearly 90 percent of all attack sorties and almost all truck sightings and effective losses have occurred in the southern area of Laos since 1 January 1968.

During April sightings and effective losses reached the highest level ever recorded in Laos. The average weekly effective loss for April was 234 trucks, while in May the loss figure dropped to 110 trucks per week. Although there was a relatively small increase in the number of attack sorties flown in Laos during

* This memorandum was prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency.

** See the footnotes to the table for explanation of the data coverage and the distinction between effective losses and pilot reports of trucks damaged and destroyed.

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April (about 2 percent) favorable weather conditions enabled the pilots to maximize their effort against the large number of trucks sighted. The average truck sightings per week in April was about 60 percent higher than the weekly average for the first quarter. Reports from roadwatch teams in southern Laos also show that truck traffic increased in April compared with the monthly average for the first quarter. The enemy normally tends to increase his logistic effort before the monsoon season which begins in May. The results of the air attacks during May do not compare favorably with either the first quarter or the month of April, mainly due to poor flying weather and a reduction in sorties. Average weekly effective losses in May were lower than during either the first quarter or April.

There has been considerable improvement in the strike effort required to inflict losses in Laos. The ratio of sorties to effective losses was about 11 sorties to one effective loss in the first quarter while the weekly average for April and May was about eight sorties to one effective loss. The data in the table reveal only minor variation in the ratio of trucks damaged to trucks destroyed; since 1 January this ratio has been about 1 truck reported damaged to 10 reported destroyed. During January - October 1967, however, the ratio in Laos was 6 damaged to 10 destroyed. In November the ratio suddenly changed to about the same as reported thus far in 1968. It is not clear why the ratio should have changed so dramatically.

The ratio of truck sightings to effective losses in North Vietnam* and Laos

* See the joint CIA-DIA memorandum of 31 May 1968, North Vietnamese Truck Losses since 31 March 1968. S/NFD.

is about the same. Comparison of other data on truck kills in Laos with the same data for North Vietnam reveals significant differences, however. The sortie rate in Laos has decreased by almost 50 percent since 1 May while the rate in North Vietnam increased by almost 20 percent, reflecting the different weather patterns in the two areas. The number of sorties required per sighting and the number of sorties per effective loss in North Vietnam are both double the number in Laos apparently reflecting less concentration on trucks as targets in North Vietnam. A major unexplained difference in ratios, however, is the relationship of trucks damaged to destroyed. In North Vietnam the ratio traditionally has been about 1 to 1, while the ratio in Laos has shifted since late 1967 to about 1 to 10.

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LAOS: Pilot Reports of Trucks Damaged and Destroyed, Effective Losses, Attack Sorties, and Ratios *
First Quarter and 1 April - 29 May 1968

	<u>Sightings</u>	<u>Reported Damaged</u>	<u>Reported Destroyed</u>	<u>Effective Losses **</u>	<u>Attack Sorties***</u>	<u>Sorties to Sightings</u>	<u>Sorties to Effective Losses</u>	<u>Ratios Sightings to Effective Losses</u>	<u>Damaged to Destroyed</u>	<u>Sightings to Total Destroyed and Damaged</u>
<u>Jan - Mar 1968</u>										
<u>TOTALS</u>	17,978	250	2,634	2,039	21,880					
<u>Average Weekly Total</u>	1,383	19	203	157	1,683	1.2:1	10.7:1	8.8:1	0.1:1	6.2:1
<u>1 April - 29 May 1968</u>										
<u>TOTALS</u>	14,926	208	1,860	1,447	11,232					
<u>Average Weekly Total</u>	1,771	25	221	172	1,333	0.8:1	7.8:1	10.3:1	0.1:1	7.2:1
<u>Total Per Week ****</u>										
4-10 April	1,710	23	298	230	1,585	0.9:1	6.9:1	7.4:1	0.1:1	5.3:1
11-17 April	2,141	23	360	276	1,967	0.9:1	7.1:1	7.8:1	0.1:1	5.6:1
18-24 April	2,882	20	343	262	1,719	0.6:1	6.6:1	11.0:1	0.1:1	7.9:1
25 Apr - 1 May	2,045	36	211	167	1,572	0.8:1	9.3:1	12.2:1	0.2:1	8.3:1
2- 8 May	1,198	30	104	86	1,017	0.8:1	11.8:1	13.9:1	0.3:1	8.9:1
9-15 May	936	28	116	94	977	1.0:1	10.4:1	10.0:1	0.2:1	6.5:1
16-22 May	1,595	14	113	89	859	0.5:1	9.6:1	17.9:1	0.1:1	12.6:1
23-29 May	1,884	28	216	169	772	0.4:1	4.6:1	11.1:1	0.1:1	7.7:1

* Includes data for all of Laos. Since 1 January the Steel Tiger area (Route 8 and south) in southern Laos has accounted for 87 percent of the sorties and 98 percent of the truck sightings and effective losses.

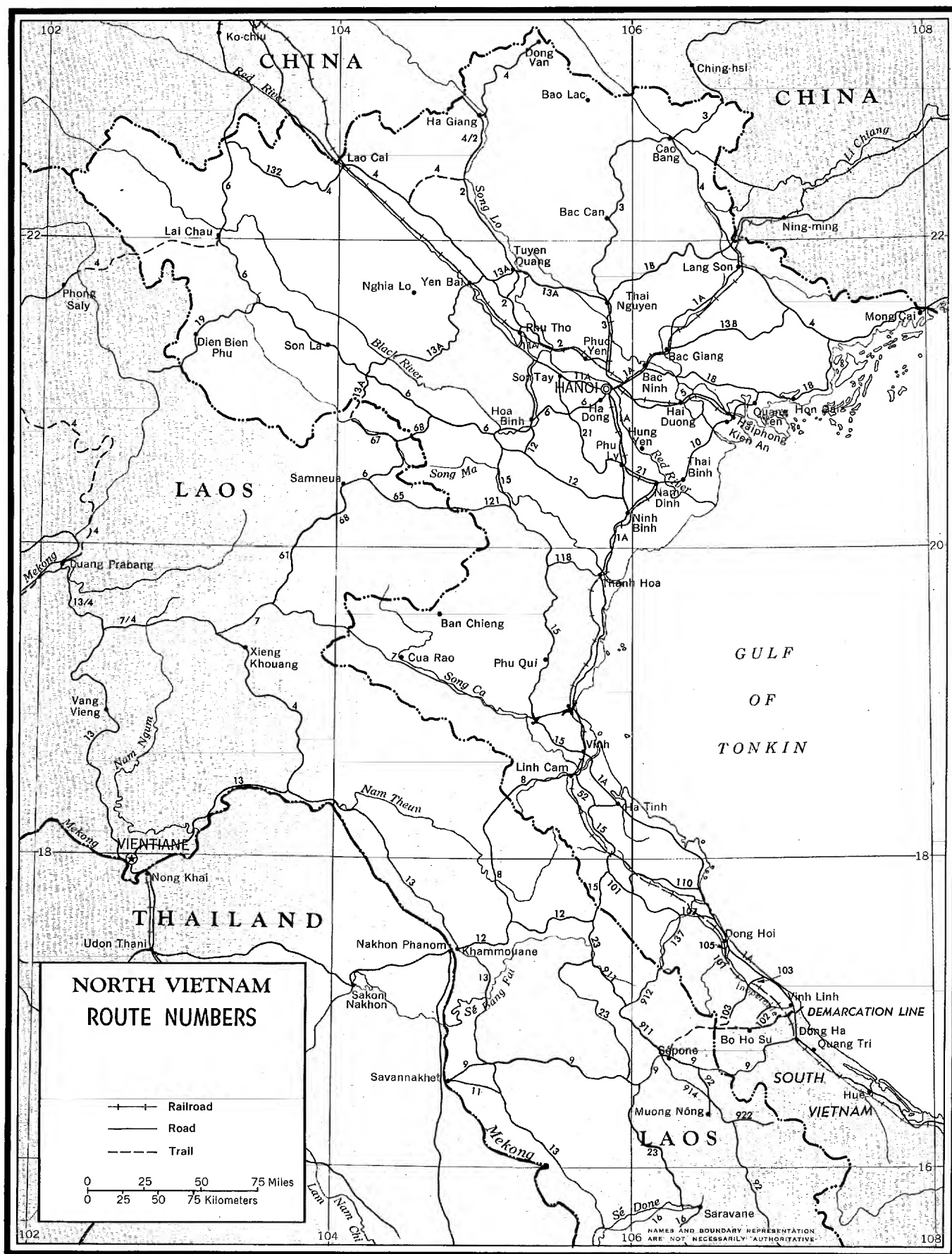
** The formula for computing effective losses used by CIA and DIA is as follows: 75 percent of those trucks reported destroyed and 25 percent of those reported damaged are considered to be effective losses and are deducted from the inventory.

*** Data from Table 30A, Southeast Asia Statistical Summary, Directorate of Statistical Services, Office of Secretary of Defense.

**** Data for 1-3 April excluded. The reporting period of Thursday through Wednesday is used to provide up-to-date data to a large number of consumers at weekend conferences.

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STATINTL

Where are losses being recorded in
The Southern Route Packages.

(A) Percentage Breakdown of Effective losses by route PK5.

(1 Jan - 22 May)

Losses

Total ATTACK
Sorties

RPI	45%	59 45 %
RP II	38%	19 38 %
RP III	15%	12 15 %
<u>Total</u>	<u>98%</u>	<u>90%</u>

90%

(B) with the attack emphasis directed

at targets (principally highway targets including motor vehicles)

found in RPI the corresponding

loss figures for vehicles in RPI

It should be noted
are also expectedly larger than the

relatively large losses recorded in

RP II generally reflect kills

between RPI & II.

RPI 16,645
 RPII 5,249
 RPIII 3420

25,314

3008

28322

66% (59%)

21% (19%)

13 (12%)

1

90

RPI's (4,5,6)

Sum 13759

F 9807

11668

35,234

25,314

9,920